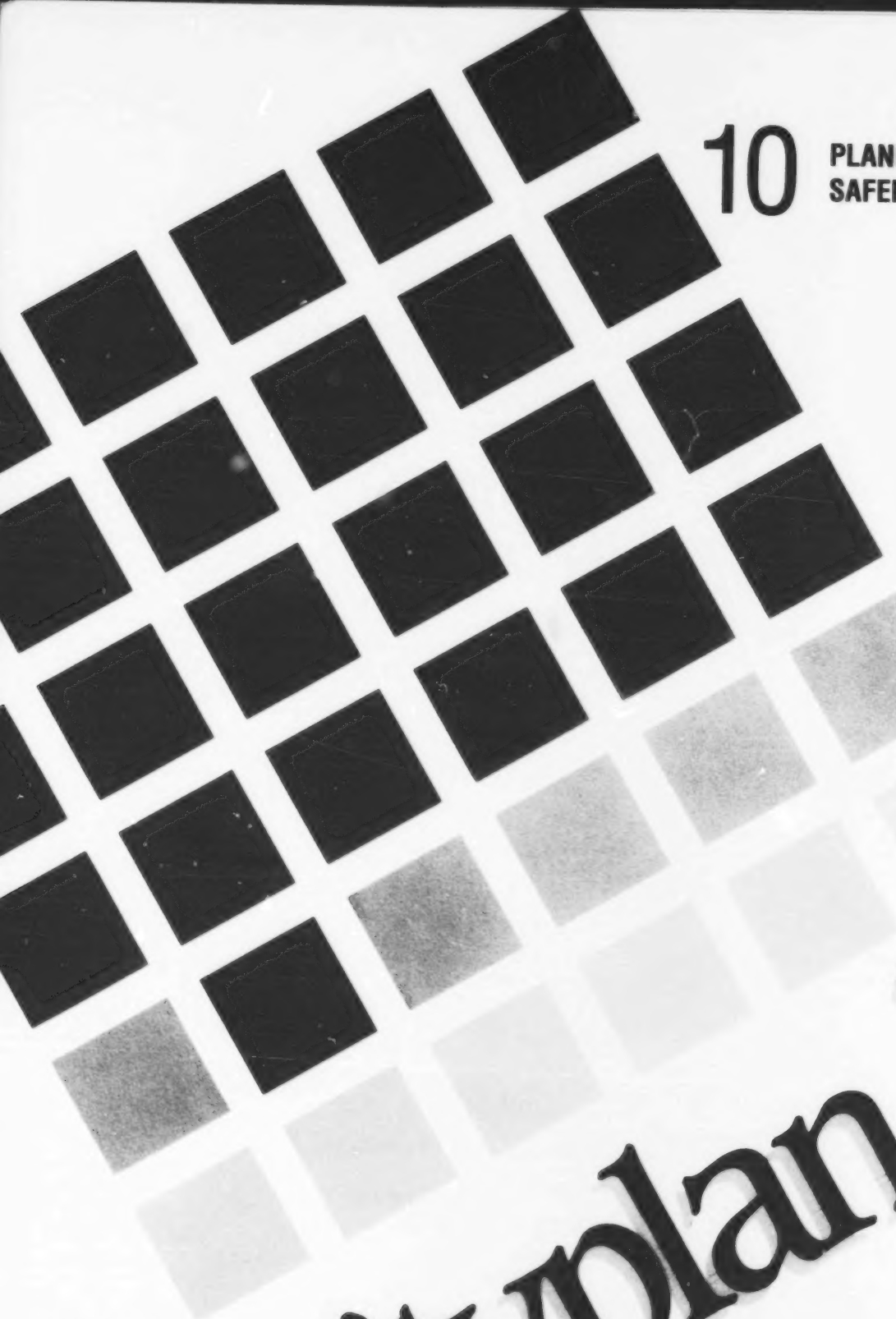


10 PLANNING FOR A SAFER CITY

Cityplan '91

City of Toronto
Planning & Development
Department

Robert E. Millward
Commissioner

10

PLANNING FOR A SAFER CITY

October 1990

$ 5 (shipping and handling extra)

City of Toronto
Planning & Development
Department

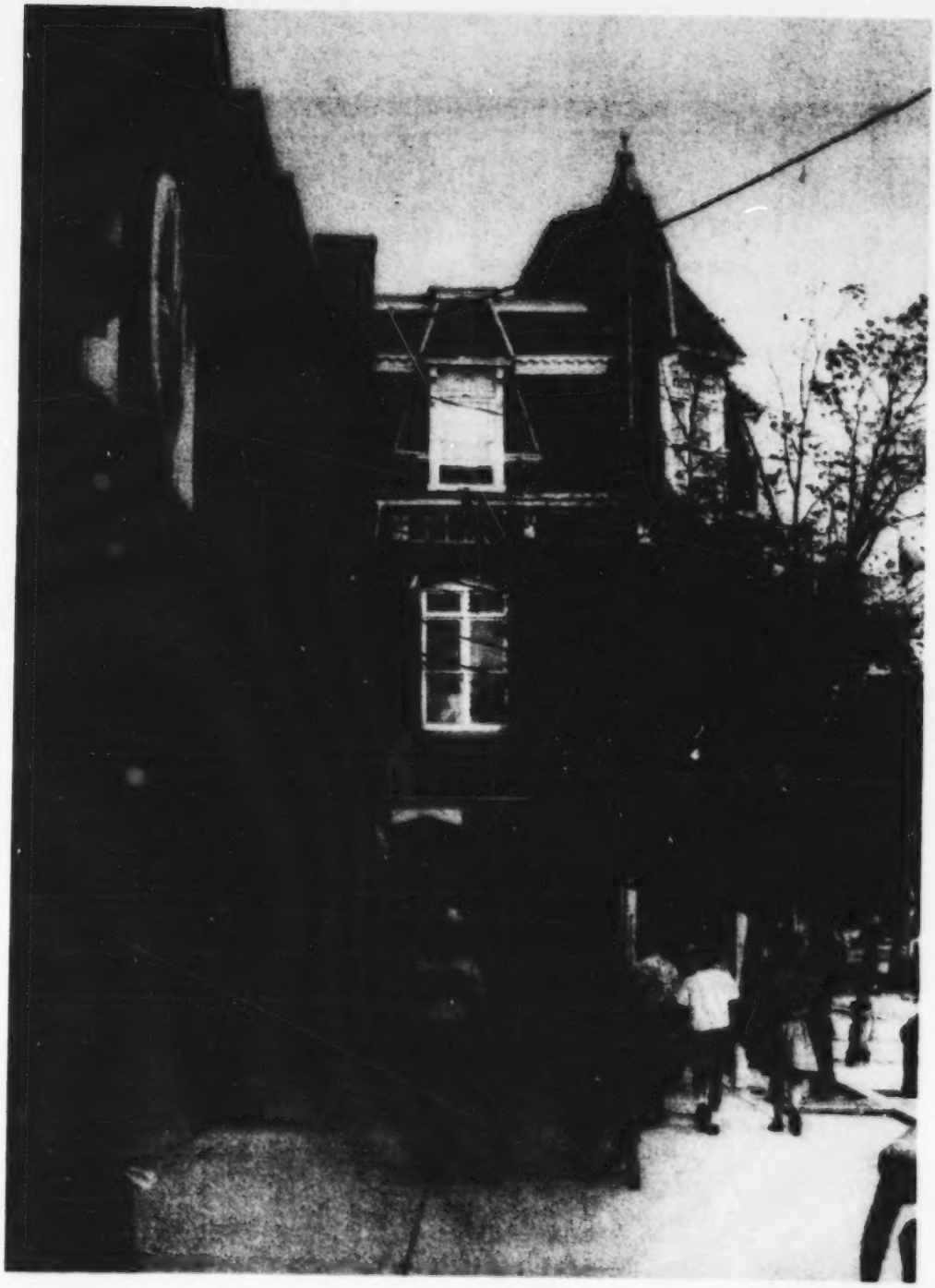
Robert E. Millward
Commissioner

For further information please contact
Carolyn Whitzman at 392-0403
Policy and Strategic Planning Division
City of Toronto, Planning and Development
Department.

Photo by Vince Pietropaolo

Contents

A safe city for everyone	1
Why is the safe city a planning issue?	3
How can the Official Plan make a difference?	5
Toronto: The 1976 Official Plan	7
Safe city initiatives since 1976 in Metro Toronto	9
Ideas from European cities	11
Implementing the recommendations	15
For further reading	17



A safe city for everyone means that all people . . . have an equal right to freedom from fear and violence in the city.
Photo by Vince Pietropaolo

A safe city for everyone

Toronto is a relatively safe place to live. Yet many people who live in Toronto do not feel free to use public spaces and public amenities because they are afraid. Many people are also prisoners in their own homes because of physical and sexual abuse by members of their families. Many people who do use the streets are physically and/or verbally attacked.

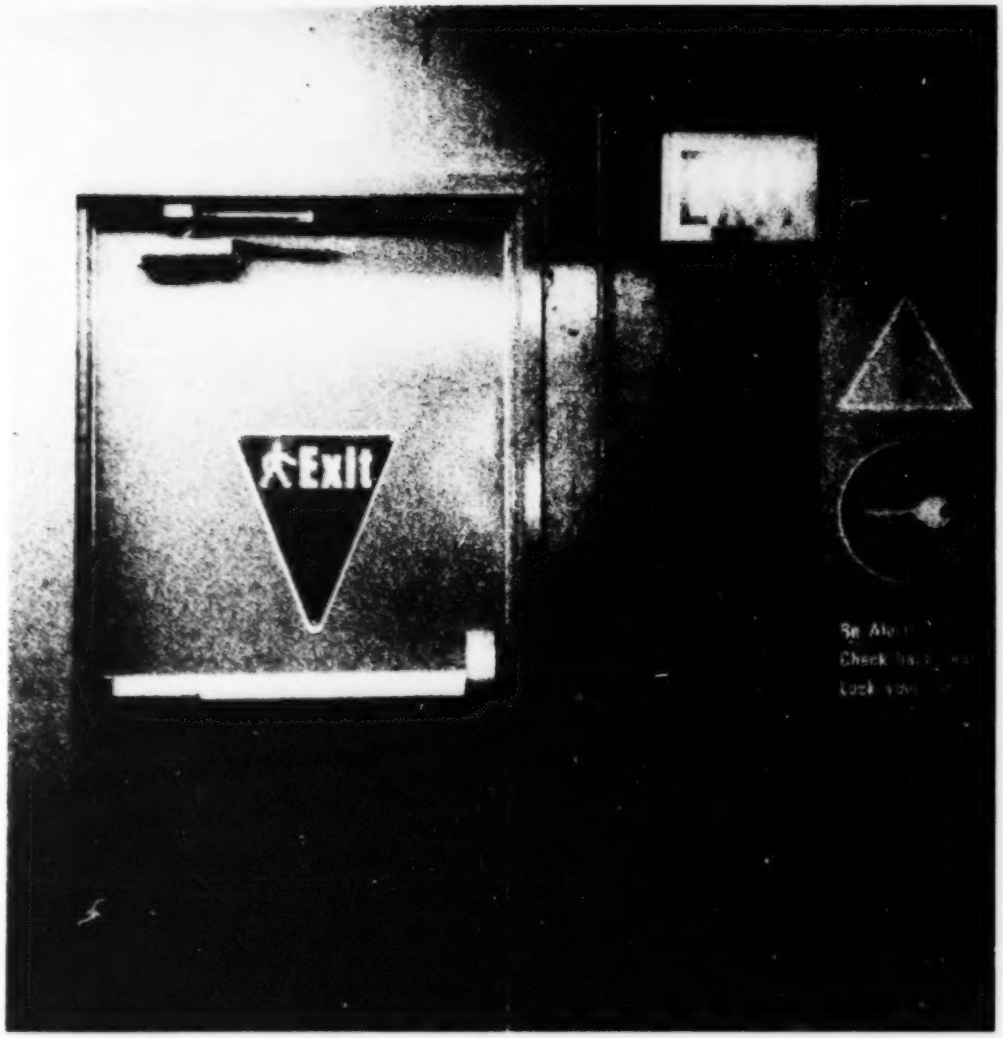
The majority of these frightened, abused, harassed and/or attacked people are women. A few statistics illustrate the magnitude of the problem:

- 56% of all Canadian women are "afraid" or "very afraid" walking alone in their neighbourhood streets at night. The corresponding statistic for Canadian men is 10% (Solicitor General of Canada, 1985).
- One in 10 Canadian women is abused by her partner. Ninety-five percent of reported spousal assault incidents involve a male partner abusing a female partner (Canadian Medical Association, 1986).
- One in four Canadian women (a conservative estimate) will be sexually assaulted at some point in her life, half of them before the age of 17 (Brickman and Briere, 1982).

A safe city for everyone means that all people, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, language, disabilities, age and sexual orientation, have an equal right to freedom from fear and violence in their city. The Safe City Committee concentrates on preventing violence against women, because women as a social group are most vulnerable. In other places that have acted to prevent violence against women, the improvements have resulted in a safer environment for everyone.

All levels of government have a role in responding to problems of safety and security. Specifically, municipal governments can do much to prevent public and private violence against women. As a recent paper commissioned by the Secretary of State recommends:

> *The fear of crime, the high levels of violent crime and the vulnerability experienced by women in our cities are interrelated problems which demand municipally-based leadership across Canada and around the world.*
>
> (McLeod, 1989).



The City of Toronto has created guidelines for underground garages in residential buildings, including lighting, signage and exits.
Photo by Vince Pietropaolo

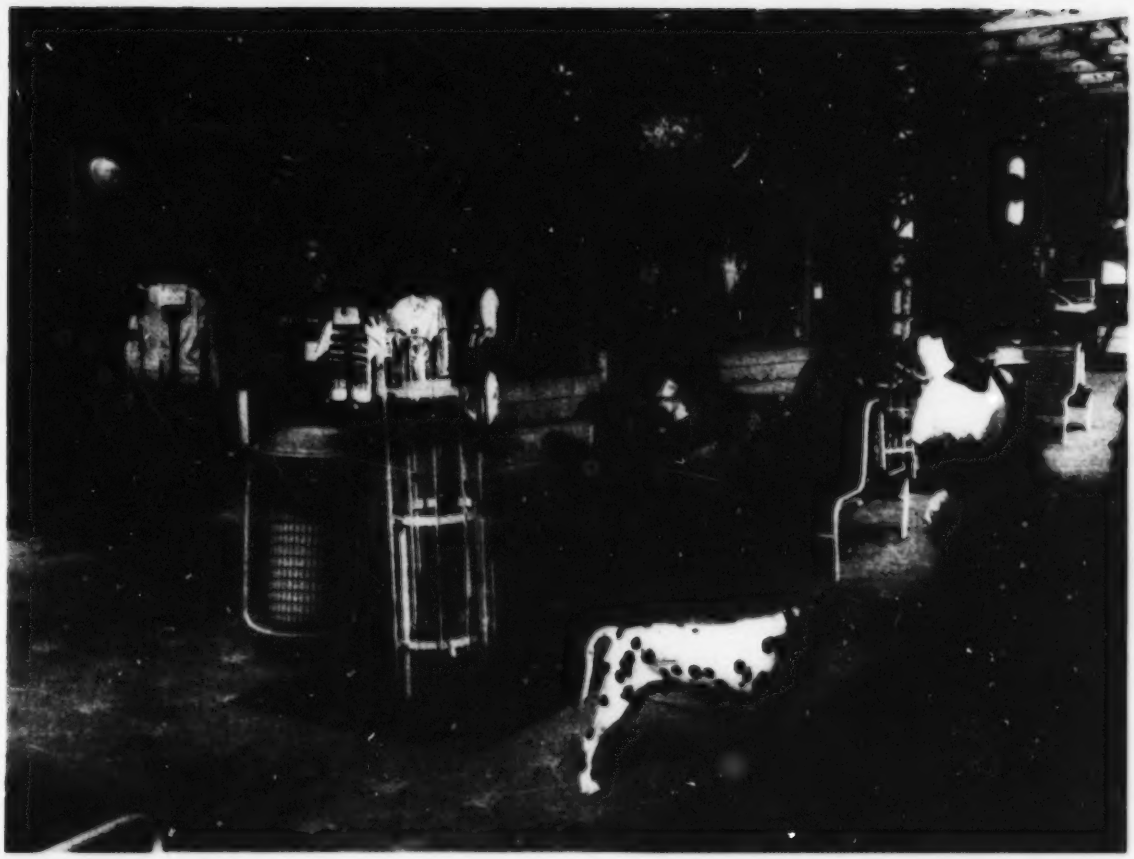
Why is the safe city a planning issue?

Strategies to promote the safety of everyone should involve a variety of City departments and committees. To use the Toronto example:

- The Parks and Recreation Department has recently offered free Wen-Do women's self-defense courses in community centres around the city.
- The Board of Health has held hearings on family violence as a public health issue, and is developing a range of health promotion strategies around family violence.
- Grant Review Board has a good record of funding women's groups and other community-based organizations which directly and indirectly combat violence.
- The Management Services Department is preparing a sexual assault prevention education strategy for City Hall, including half-day workshops for all City employees and workplace "safety audits".
- The Buildings and Inspections, Public Works, Planning and Development, and Legal Departments have all been involved in the creation of guidelines for underground garages in residential buildings.

The Planning and Development Department can also act on a number of strategies. The rationale for safety and security as a planning concern has been expressed most succinctly by a London, UK document:

> *The threat of violent or sexual attack or harassment while walking on the street or using public transport, places severe limitations on the use that women make of the city. This means restricted access to public life and facilities including entertainment and social visits as well as essential services and jobs.*
>
> *Women have a right to use the city when and how they choose. Fewer women out at night means that they are less secure and have their rights to use the city undermined.*
>
> *Planning and design obviously do not create this problem, but a recognition of these dangers and the implications for women's use of the city could do much to create a safer environment.*
>
> (Greater London Council 1986):



Design guidelines, aimed at making open space safer, as well as improving community consultation on safety issues, are being developed as part of the Cityplan '91 process.
Photo by Vince Pietropaolo

How can the Official Plan make a difference?

The 1991 Official Plan can enshrine two major strategies to make the city safer. The first direction involves creating guidelines for safe open space and training City staff to look at proposals from that perspective, as part of the Development Review process.

The second strategy involves including a range of shelter options, including emergency hostels and second-stage housing, in every neighbourhood, for people who are forced to leave their homes, temporarily or permanently, because of sexual or physical abuse.

Both of these strategies have been implemented in other cities. Design guidelines that integrate women's security concerns have been developed in Amsterdam, London, UK and Manchester. Setting priorities for short-term and longer-term shelters serving battered and/or abused women and children in existing neighbourhoods has been a policy in several London, UK boroughs.

The City of Toronto can also legitimate concerns about women's safety by including "the right to a safe city" as one of the objectives of the Official Plan. This would involve a general policy statement in the Part I Plan, and include safety as an important consideration in all sections of the Part I Plan dealing with Neighbourhoods, Housing, Parks and Ravines and the Central Area.

The right to a safe city would also involve the development of Development Review Guidelines, similar in form to the Guidelines for a Barrier Free Environment that are presently utilized by planning staff and made available to developers and builders. Guidelines would, of course, be open to re-evaluation and amendment, like the rest of the Official Plan.

The Ontario Planning Act (1983, revised 1989) is the document regulating Official Plans and the process of Development Review. The provisions of the Planning Act certainly anticipate the development of the strategies outlined.

Section 1(h) of the Act defines "official plan" as a document "having regard to relevant social, economic and environmental matters". The Official Plans of Toronto, York and Scarborough all identify "safety of the population" as one of their goals (Metrac 1990).

Approval of plans (i.e., Development Review) is covered in Section 40 of the Act. In order to have their plan approved, developers must submit information and drawings describing:

> *(a) the massing and conceptual design of the proposed building;*
>
> *(b) the relationship of the proposed building to adjacent buildings, streets, and exterior areas to which members of the public have access; and*
>
> *(c) the provision of interior walkways, stairs, elevators and escalators to which members of the public have access from streets, open spaces and interior walkways in adjacent buildings.*

Developers must:

> *provide to the satisfaction of and at no expense to the municipality any or all of the following:*
>
> *...3. Off-street vehicular loading and parking facilities, either covered or uncovered; access driveways, including driveways for emergency vehicles, and the surfacing of such areas and driveways.*
>
> *4. Walkways and walkway ramps, including the surfacing thereof, and all other means of pedestrian access.*
>
> *5. Facilities for the lighting, including floodlighting of the land or of any buildings or structures thereon.*
>
> *6. Wall, fences, hedges, trees, shrubs or other groundcover or facilities for the landscaping of the lands or the protection of adjoining lands.*
>
> *7. Vaults, central storage and collection areas and other facilities and enclosures for the storage of garbage and other waste material....*

These powers should be sufficient to cover the safety and security guidelines envisioned.

Toronto
The 1976 Official Plan

The 1976 Official Plan had little to say on the subject of a safe city. There were, however, a number of statements that had indirect effects on safety and security.

Safety is mentioned in Section 8 (Community Improvement Policies):

> *8A.2 In improving the quality of life in the City for residents, workers and visitors, Council shall undertake community improvement programmes and activities in accordance with the following objectives:*
>
> *a) to improve the amenity, appearance, **safety** and environmental quality of all areas of the City; [emphasis added] ...*

This general objective of "safety" is not further elaborated in the Part I Plan or a Part II Plan, so it is of limited usefulness.

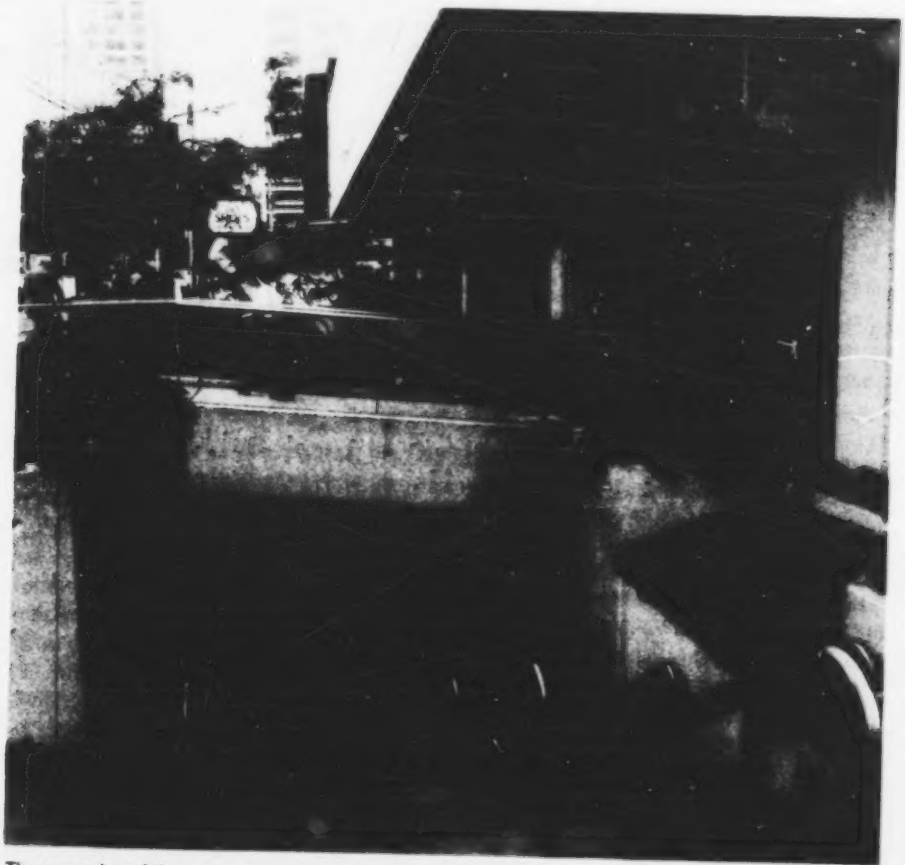
Section 8 also states as a goal "equality of access to suitable social recreational facilities and other supportive services in all areas of the City" (8A.2 c)), but shelters are not specified as one of these supportive services.

Statements regarding the central core, residential areas, housing, and ravines also had an impact on safety. For instance, the rather contradictory policy on grade separation – extending the above-ground and underground network while trying to ensure that the "ground level pedestrian realm is active, comfortable and diverse" (1A.47) – may have contributed to tunnels and overhead walkways constructed with few or no design guidelines, the abandonment of some streets in the Central Core (especially during winter and after work hours), and a generally adverse effect on safety and security. Another example is found in Section 1:

> *1.1(e)(ii) It is the policy of Council to encourage landscaping and screening where possible to protect the low density residence areas from other areas which might have an adverse affect on them.*

This policy, if poorly implemented, could increase the danger of the journey from public transit to work or home, by decreasing the amount of informal surveillance of pedestrians from cars and houses.

The current policy regarding emergency shelters arises from By-law Number 332-78 (amended by By-law Number 779-87), which establishes an 800-foot minimum distance between "crisis care" facilities. While trying to fulfill an admirable objective (preventing the over-concentration of crisis care facilities in one area), the policy has the effect of limiting the choices of shelters as to where they can locate.



The expansion of the underground and above-ground network in the Central Core during the period 1976-1990 may have resulted in less active, comfortable and diverse streets.
Photo by Vince Pietropaolo

Safe city initiatives since 1976 in Metro Toronto

In 1982, several widely publicized rape-murders in Metro led to the formation of the Metro Task Force on Public Violence against Women and Children. The Urban Design Subcommittee of this Task Force made a number of relevant recommendations in their final report (March 1984), such as the Metro Toronto Police Force working together with Metro planners to collect and review data on where public sexual assaults had taken place, forming working groups on street safety, and creating design principles and guidelines to be used during the site plan approval process.

One of the results of the Metro Task Force was the creation of Metrac (the Metro Action Committee on Public Violence against Women and Children). Metrac has taken concrete steps towards the realization of those recommendations. For example, they have conducted a safety audit of TTC subway stations (in conjunction with the TTC and Metro police), carried out a safety audit of High Park, and developed a women's safety audit kit for use by community groups. In conjunction with Women Plan Toronto and York University's Faculty of Environmental Studies, Metrac produced the *Women in Safe Environments [WISE] Report*, which asked Metro women where they felt afraid and why.

The latter part of the 1980s also saw the emergence of grassroots organizations committed to fighting violence against women in their own communities. Groups like the Riverdale Women's Action Committee (and other women's action committees in High Park, the Annex and the Beaches), Metro Men against Violence, and the Coalition of Visible Minority and Immigrant Women have contributed research, resources and energy to the struggle to make women's safety a planning issue.

In September of 1988, Toronto City Council adopted *The Safe City Report: municipal strategies for preventing public violence against women*. The Safe City Committee began meeting in April of 1989; its mandate is to "monitor the implementation of the recommendations in the Safe City Report" and to "develop further policy to enhance the safety of women".

The first recommendation of the Safe City Report is:

> *that City Council establish a policy on public safety to be incorporated into Toronto's Official Plan and that this policy be elaborated on in Part II Plans and included in the Quinquennial Review.*

Two other recommendations are directly relevant to this report:

> 4. *That City Council authorize the designation of a planner responsible for developing comprehensive safe design guidelines for developers,*

and

> 5. *That City Council authorize the training of all planning staff to take security considerations into account with the public, with particular effort directed at getting input from women.*

Most recently, City Council adopted a report (City of Toronto 1989) on family violence which recommended:

> *... that City Council ensure that the official plan developed for City Plan '91 includes zoning that allows for a wide range of housing types in a neighbourhood, including emergency shelter and second stage housing options for women with or without children, seniors and youth.*

In other words, the recommendations of this policy paper have already been approved as official city policy, and flow from other initiatives that have recently taken place. Further recent policy reinforcement for Safe City principles and proposals have come from the *Cityplan '91 Goals and Objectives Report* and the *Healthy Toronto 2000 Report*.

The next section will look at several municipalities in two countries, England and the Netherlands, that can serve as role models for Toronto's strategies.

Ideas from European cities

Amsterdam and other Netherlands cities

The Netherlands Government has made crime prevention a national priority. Their integrated approach towards "society and crime", outlined in a 1987 policy paper published by the Ministry of Housing, Physical Planning and the Environment, highlighted the role of physical and social planning. While planning for safety was considered "first and foremost a responsibility of local authorities", the Ministry aids municipalities by researching, sharing information, and providing pilot project funding.

Amsterdam has come the farthest in developing urban planning policies for public safety. The City's strategy includes the use of general land-use principles (e.g., enhancing residential and work functions of declining areas) as well as specific guidelines for types of places. The guidelines take into account that sexual assault sites differ from the sites of other crimes of opportunity.

Amsterdam has also developed a planning process which emphasizes input from individual women and women's groups on safety issues. A publicity campaign that asked women to point out "unsafe places", carried in newspapers and posters, resulted in the naming and amelioration of some 200 sites. A pilot project where a group of lay women supervised the planning of a set of office buildings was administered by the local planning authority. Neighbourhood women were also solicited for a task force on making a commuter train station safer.

In Eindhoven, a city of 300,000 people, a researcher was hired to analyze where public sexual assaults had occurred in the past five years and to suggest ways that the planning department might improve these sites. The researcher discovered that a high percentage of the assaults occurred along a major transportation artery, and the city embarked on a campaign to improve lighting and visibility along the corridor. Eindhoven also utilized a community publicity campaign that resulted in people, mostly women, suggesting which unsafe places should be improved (Whitzman 1989).

Almere, a new town of 50,000 people, also carried out extensive research on where women feel unsafe. The research has led to the amendment of certain planning principles (e.g., bike paths are no longer detoured along isolated paths).

Women in several Netherlands cities have complained about the isolation of bicycle paths from streets and other activities. The solution to traffic safety is not taking bicycles off the streets!
Photo by Vince Pietropaolo

London and other United Kingdom cities

In 1986, just before the Greater London Council was dissolved, a series of policy papers was produced on planning. One such paper, *Changing Places: positive action on women and planning*, detailed some successful projects that local boroughs had accomplished (Greater London Council 1986).

The London Borough of Newham employs a community safety officer to monitor the borough's performance on safety, particularly for women, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities, and to identify the needs of Newham people suffering racial and sexual harassment through contact with local community groups. She is to "recommend policies, proceedures and practices designed to define the Council's approach and integrate community safety issues with all other aspects of the Council's work."

Finsbury Park Improvement Plan is a non-statutory plan whose first objective is: "to create a more attractive, safer and less hostile environment". The Plan also states: "specific attention will be paid to the needs of women by protecting their personal safety."

Women have also been specifically consulted by some boroughs in safety improvement schemes. For instance, in response to requests at a women's open meeting, Camden Women's Committee Support Unit asked women to fill in cards notifying them about defective lighting in their streets. The Women's Committee ensured an additional sum in the Planning and Communications Committee budget 1983/84 and 1984/85 to improve street lighting in the borough.

The London Boroughs of Southwark, Wandsworth and Haringey have developed planning guidelines for the use of developers and planning staff.

Safety from family violence as well as public safety has been considered by London-area boroughs. The Community Based Local Plan for Greenwich contains the following policy in its housing chapter:

> *"H29 The Council will give sympathetic consideration to proposals for residential homes for the elderly, hostels, shared houses or cluster flats, refuges and other supported accommodation required by the local community for special needs."*

On the subject of refuges [shelters] the explanatory memorandum goes on to say:

> *"Wherever possible refuges should be sited in residential areas for residents to have good access to essential services including shops and transport".*

Other London boroughs have taken other steps to encourage the quality and quantity of shelters by, for instance, advising on the completion of planning applications and dealing with applications on a confidential agenda with addresses omitted.

Manchester is also engaged in the process of consultation and the creation of guidelines to make cities safer for women. A city-wide survey of women's experiences of crime was commissioned by their City Council (Manchester 1986). The survey led to recommendations, including the development of planning guidelines. So far, guidelines have been developed for footpaths, planting, lighting, and tunnels and underpasses (Manchester 1987).

One sign of the vitality of the British projects is their ability to withstand and learn from critiques of their process. Women's Design Service and the London Planning Aid Service have both been hired as consultants to evaluate the effectiveness of local initiatives (LPAS 1987, Women's Design Service 1988).

Experience in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom as well as Toronto has shown that listening to women in their communities about their crime problems and suggested solutions is an essential task for planners.
Photo by John Flanders

Implementing the recommendations

To recap, the recommended additions to the Official Plan for including "the right to a safe city" are:

1. That the City ensure that buildings and open space are designed with women's safety in mind by:
   - training planning staff to take security considerations into account in their regular consultations with the public, with particular effort directed at getting input from women
   - creating guidelines for safe open public space, to be used as part of the Development Review process, and
2. That the City ensure zoning that allows for a wide range of housing types in any neighbourhood, including emergency shelter and second stage housing options for women with or without children, seniors and youth.

These recommendations are already part of City policy. The question here is how these recommendations will be implemented through the Official Plan.

Training

A workshop for planning staff, focusing on Planning for a Safer City was provided to the Planning and Development Department on a section-by-section basis from April 20 to June 8, 1990. A final report, evaluating the workshops and suggesting any follow-up measures, was adopted by Planning and Development's Senior Management Group on July 13, 1990. A majority of planners attended this introductory session for which an information package on including safety and security concerns in planning was prepared. Input was also solicited from the planners on the creation of guidelines: what they should and should not contain.

Interest has been expressed in repeating the workshop for other municipal planning departments, other departments in the city, and private sector developers and consultants.

Guidelines

Preliminary guidelines will be developed from August to December 1990. A working group will be established, made up of representatives of the Architecture and Urban Design, Central Core and Waterfront, Community and Neighbourhoods, and Zoning and Legislation Divisions of the Planning and Development Department. This work-

ing group will meet twice, once to comment on the first draft of the guidelines, and once to comment on the final draft. The Metrac document on planning guidelines may be of use at this stage.

Guidelines will be evaluated by community groups who sit on Safe City Committee at a special Safe City meeting in November 1990. Additional copies of the draft document will go out to other interested groups before the meeting.

Guidelines (first edition, dealing with public space, not open space or housing) will be published January 1991.

Shelters

The Supportive Housing Study, which is being conducted for the City by the Starr Group will deal with emergency shelters and will indicate zoning changes that can facilitate supportive housing.

Input from shelters on problems they have faced and suggestions on how planners can help will be considered at a Safe City Committee meeting in January 1991.

For further reading

Starred articles are available from the Safe City Committee. For copies please contact Sue Molyneaux, Committee Assistant, at 392-7732.

Brickman, Julie and John Briere. "Incidence of Rape and Sexual Assault in an Urban Canadian Population," *International Journal of Women's Studies* 7 (3), 1986.

Canadian Medical Association. "Family Violence" 1986.

* City of Toronto. "Safe City Report". Adopted by Toronto City Council September 19, 1988.

* City of Toronto. "Board of Health Report on Family Violence". Adopted by Toronto City Council, February 20, 1990.

Gordon, Margaret and Stephanie Riger *The Female Fear*. McMillan,1989.

* Greater London Council. *Women on the Move: GLC survey on women and transport* 1986.

* Greater London Council. *Changing Places: positive action on women and planning* 1986.

* Haringey, London Borough of "What makes women feel safe?" 1986.

* Haringey Town Planning Service. "A guide for Developers, towards a safer environment" 1988.

* London Planning Advisory Service. "Planning for Women: an evaluation of consultation in three London Boroughs" 1987.

* Manchester City Council. "Breaking the Silence: Manchester Women Speak Out! women and violence survey report" 1986.

* Manchester City Planning Department. "Planning for a Safer Environment for Women" 1987.

* McLeod, Linda. "The City for Women: no safe place". Prepared for the Corporate Policy Branch, Secretary of State Canada 1989.

Metro Toronto Action Committee on Violence against Women and Children [Metrac]. Untitled draft document on planning guidelines 1990.

Metrac. *Moving Forward: Making Transit Safer for Women* 1989.

Metrac "Women's Safety Audit Kit" 1989.

- Metro Toronto Task Force on Violence against women and children. Final report 1984.

- Ministry of Housing, Physical Planning and the Environment [Netherlands]. "Urban Planning and Community Safety" 1987

- Ministry of Housing, Physical Planning and the Environment [Netherlands]. "Times are Changing: the impact of women's emancipation on the field of housing and physical planning" 1988.

Ministry of the Attorney General [Ontario]. *Planning Act, 1983.* Amended 1989.

Solicitor General of Canada. "Female Victims of Crime", Bulletin 4, Canadian Urban Victimization Survey 1985.

- Southwark, London Borough of. "Safety guidelines" (draft) 1985.

- Southwark, London Borough of. "Housing Security Design Guide" 1985.

van Wyk, Josephine "Making Safe the Streets of Amsterdam", in *Town and Country Planning* 1987.

- Wandsworth, London Borough of. "Planning Design Guidelines: personal safety and security" 1986.

Whitzman, Carolyn "Letter from the Netherlands", *Women and Environments* 11 (3 4) 1989.

Women Plan Toronto, Metrac, Faculty of Environmental Studies. "The Women in Safe Environments Report" 1987 (available from Metrac).

- Women's Design Service (London). *Women's Safety on Housing Estates* 1988.